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ABSTRACT

Vocational education teachers can use a variety of teaching methods and classroom techniques to help their students develop good work attitudes. First, the teacher can serve as a role model, acting as students should act when they are employed in industry. Along with role modeling, teachers should make sure that attitudinal development finds its way into all aspects of an instructional program. Implementing a plan to develop attitudes requires the teacher to evaluate students' progress continuously in relation to their learning characteristics. The Affective Work Competencies Inventory (AWCI) is one particularly effective tool for evaluating student work attitudes in 15 different areas. This inventory is especially revealing when used in a pre- and posttest setting. Focusing on work attitudes as an equal and essential part of a vocational program is one way in which teachers can help students realize their employment ambitions. (MN)

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Teaching Students How to Get Along on the Job

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Running Head: TEACHING STUDENTS

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Teaching Students How to Get Along On The Job

Work attitudes are more important now than at any time in history. Good work attitudes are necessary to obtain employment, keep a job, and be promoted. Every vocational graduate should leave training with positive attitudes developed during the program.

With the high tech age in progress, students have less opportunity to explore jobs. Thus, students may enroll in vocational programs with little knowledge about the world of work. Instructors must focus on the basics of work and build upon these basics until job related competencies, including attitude related competencies are attained.

With few requirements for enrolling in a vocational program, students have diverse characteristics that may or may not help when learning job related tasks. This means some students may not learn easily during the instructional process. Teachers must do a good job of identifying those that need help and provide instruction that meets individual learning styles and characteristics.

A number of students may have poor work attitudes before enrolling in vocational programs. This would occur because of cultural differences, life styles, or other characteristics. This provides a challenge for vocational teachers to design and implement an instructional program that assists all students to gain necessary skills.

During the past decade there has been many students enrolling in vocational programs who are classified as special needs students

(those who need additional assistance to profit from instruction). According to latest national statistics, about 20% of T & I students fit in the category. A study by Crosby (1983) found that over 80% of the students in an urban area were special needs students. Many of these students lack the basic skills such as reading, writing, and math. The instructor must provide additional help so these students leave training with attitudes necessary to adjust to employment.

There are many student variables that make a vocational teacher's job difficult. All the variables point to the fact that great care must be taken by teachers when planning, implementing and evaluating instruction. Appropriate types of instruction, combined with effective learning techniques will lead to student accomplishment of all tasks, including those that are attitudinal.

The Teachers as a Role Model

A Vocational teacher has a great influence on students. Programs are usually scheduled for several hours a day, so the teacher's actions are constantly being observed and evaluated by students. Appropriate actions and responses of the teacher will be noted by students. Additionally, Vocational teachers have a great deal of experience and are the unquestioned experts in their field. These factors result in student respect, which the teacher must capitalize on to maximize instruction.

First of all, the teacher should act as he/she wishes the students to act when they are employed in industry. Appropriate

dress is important as this will make an impression on students. They will relate what a teacher is wearing with what is required on the job. Even though students might not appear as though they are watching, they will remember the teachers appearance when they are interested in getting and holding a job.

Teachers who disobey rules and regulations of the school are inviting students to disobey the same rules. Students begin to think that rules are made to be broken and rules of the occupation fall into the same category. Teachers must convey the attitude that rules and regulations are there for a purpose and are important to follow.

A teacher should act confident, yet admit mistakes when appropriate. Students pick up on how the teacher acts and they tend to react similarly when employed in the occupation.

If students are to be organized on the job, teachers should provide examples for students to follow. Lesson plans, instructional management, and facility management should be organized and planned to illustrate "this is the way it is on the job."

Speaking correctly is important for a teacher. Students have been taught in their high school that correct speech is an important aspect of succeeding. If the vocational teacher uses incorrect English and questionable language, this confuses students as they compare what they have been told and what they observe. It also gives students the impression that everyone speaks that way on the job.

Teachers should be an advocate for their profession. If a teacher likes working in the occupational area, this will transfer to students. However, if teachers dislike working in the occupation, students realize this and develop negative attitudes about working in the occupation.

Work Attitude Information

Before designing strategies for including work attitudes in instruction, important information about work attitudes should be reviewed. Following is information obtained from the literature:

(1) Special needs students may need additional assistance to develop positive attitudes (Crosby, 1983).

(2) Students in different grade levels might develop attitudes differently (Crosby, 1983).

(3) Role modeling seems to be effective to develop many attitudes (Malowney, 1983).

(4) Workers in different occupational areas have different profiles of attitudes (Beach, Kazanas, and Smith, 1982).

Including Work Attitudes in Instruction

Along with role modeling, teachers must be sure that attitudinal development finds its way into all aspects of an instructional program. Several different techniques of dealing with attitudes can be considered.

One Technique

One important finding in the literature is that workers in different occupations have different patterns of work attitudes

(Kazanas and Beach, 1978). This requires teachers to determine what attitudes student in their training programs should obtain to be best prepared to enter the world of work. This allows teachers to make decisions about where the attitudes are best developed in the program.

Reviewing what has already been done is a good start in determining what should be included in instruction. This can provide a listing of attitudes that should be emphasized in particular training programs (See Beach et al., 1982). It may be necessary to add to the list because of the diversity of training, characteristics of the student population, or input from employers hiring graduates. The outcome should result in a listing of attitudes as complete and accurate as possible.

The next step is somewhat more difficult. Once a listing is obtained, the teacher must decide what student indicators are necessary to exhibit appropriate attitudes. For example, suppose a listing is developed that contains the items of: Ambitious, Punctual, Helpful, Careful, and Accurate. The teacher may start by selecting and analyzing one of these items. If Ambitious were selected, the teacher decides this attitude may be observed in the training program by determining if students (a) Finish what they are doing, (b) Try to do a better job, (c) Attempt new skills to help them succeed on the job, (d) Work hard at all times, (e) Try new and difficult assignments, and (f) set goals that match individual abilities. Once this is done, other attitudes are broken down into

components that can be included in instruction.

The next step is to include attitude development in instruction. The teacher decides where each attitude component can be addressed. This requires thought about all aspects of the instructional process. Attitude development may be included in: separate skill and/or knowledge lessons as "key points," as an integral part of instructional management, and, in carrying out an effective lab/shop management system. In this step, the goal of the teacher is to decide on an overall instructional plan that includes addressing every important attitude component.

Once attitudes are identified and planning is completed for delivery, the teacher must be sure that every student is aware of attitudes needed to succeed as a worker. One successful technique is to discuss important attitudes at one time with students so they understand why particular attitudes are needed to obtain and hold a job. This is followed by the teacher continuously mentioning important attitudes throughout the program and relating attitudes to all skill and knowledge activities. Once students are aware that certain attitudes are expected, the teacher can proceed without surprising students about actions taken in regard to certain student attitudes.

Implementing a Plan

Implementing a plan to develop attitudes requires the teacher to continuously evaluate students progress in relation to their learning characteristics. As this is occuring, determinations

should be made of what can be done to help each student build upon strengths and eliminate weaknesses. This requires teachers to: stress certain attitudes that need to be improved, point out when attitude adjustments need to be made and, verbalize approval when attitude development is progressing. For those who require additional help, such as special needs students, role modeling, praise, encouragement, rewarding for accomplishments, and other accepted techniques are useful.

Another Idea

Implementing a testing program is a good way to emphasize and teach proper work attitudes. An instrument such as the Affective Work Competencies Inventory (AWCI) developed by Beach et al. (1982) can be used as an effective tool in instruction. The inventory is a 95 item instrument describing 15 clusters of affective competencies (work attitudes). These competencies are:

1. Ambitious
2. Cooperative/helpful
3. Adaptable/resourceful
4. Independent/initiating
5. Accurate/quality of work
6. Pleasant/friendly/cheerful
7. Responsive/follow directions
8. Careful/alert/perceptive
9. Considerate/courteous
10. Emotionally stable/judgmental/poised

11. Persevering/patient/enduring/tolerant
12. Neat/orderly/personal appearance/manner
13. Dependable/punctual/reliable/responsible
14. Efficient/quality of work/achieving/speedy
15. Dedicated/devoted/honest/loyal/conscientious

The 95 items in the instrument can be used to point out the different components of attitudes students need to display if they are to succeed on the job. These items can be read and discussed with students so they know the attitude components you will be trying to develop during the training program. This method was used successfully in a study by Crosby (1983). Of course, this particular instrument is copywrited (Kazanas and Beach, 1978), so the authors must be contacted before using.

When using an instrument, such as the AWCI, a pre-and-post test is desirable. The pre-test allows the teacher to make some decisions from the results. The post-test, that is giving the test near the end of a period of training, helps the teacher to determine students progress and teacher effectiveness. Following are some ideas about how a teacher could use test scores:

1. Compare a student's score with how the teacher rated the student. This would give the teacher an idea of the student's self concept of work attitudes. From this, strategies could be developed to increase the student's self-concept, or if necessary, ways could be devised to help the student make a more realistic assessment of work attitudes.

2. Compare a student's score with other students' scores. This allows the teacher to determine how a student stands in relation to other students in the program. This could indicate to the teacher that a student needs more assistance, or is at an appropriate level for that point and time in the program.
3. Assess whether or not a student is making appropriate progress towards matching the work attitude levels of workers in the occupational area. This can be accomplished by using data furnished with the instrument (if available), or by projecting what is necessary from teacher experiences and/or business and industry input. Interpretation of scores in this manner may result in new or modified learning experiences for the student.
4. Help students assess their levels of work attitudes. It may be helpful to use a graph to show each student how his/her scores compare to the average scores for students in the program, or workers in the occupation. This can be followed by discussing and recommending appropriate actions to be taken to improve levels of attitudes.
5. Display information about the group of students in a manner that would assist in evaluating instruction. A teacher could compare the average scores of students to scores of students in like programs, or to scores from previous testing efforts, or to scores from workers in the field.

This information would help to determine the effectiveness of instruction developing work attitudes.

Evaluation

As students become aware that attitude development is an integral part of the program, the teacher must reinforce this by evaluating students frequently in an informal manner and periodically in a more formal manner. Informal evaluations are made throughout the instruction to assist students to identify and improve attitudes. Formal evaluations may be done by one-on-one discussions of test results as noted above. Or, the teacher may wish to develop an instrument that would be helpful to use as a vehicle to initiate discussion and feedback from students. A teacher developed rating sheet could take the following form:

1. Workers in metal working occupations need to be helpful to each other because more than 1 worker usually works on a particular assignment. During the class you:

   Helped others to work together Yes or No?

   Helped others when they needed help! Yes or No?

Other statements could be developed from attitudes that were accepted for a particular occupation. The teacher can put as many statements as will be effective to help in forming student attitudes. Since evaluations will take place periodically, the teacher may want to use a type of rating system that shows student improvement. A scale that goes from poor to good to excellent would be useful. Student ratings could be compared from time to time to

identify instructional effectiveness and/or the willingness of the student to accomplish what is necessary.

A teacher's effectiveness to deal with the attitude development of students may determine the fate of graduates in the workplace. Can students obtain employment? Will they remain in employment after the probationary or initial period of time? Will they succeed in the job that they select? These and other job related questions should be the motivating force behind the inclusion of work attitudes in an instructional program. By focusing on attitudes as an equal and essential part of a program, the teacher has taken a large step in helping students to realize their employment ambitions.

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